



AUSTRALIAN
FUNERAL
DIRECTORS
ASSOCIATION

Australian Funeral Directors
Association Limited
Level 1, 700 High Street
(PO Box 291)
KEW EAST VIC 3102

The Hon. Brad Hazzard MP
Minister for Health
GPO Box 5341 Sydney
NSW 2001

12th August 2021

Dear Minister,

COVID-19 VACCINE ALLOCATION – REQUEST FOR HIGH-RISK PRIORITY GROUP INCLUSION

The Australian Funeral Directors Association (AFDA) is the peak industry body with members in all States and Territories representing around 65% of the 160,000 deaths in Australia annually. We write to ask the NSW Government to make special arrangements for funeral sector workers to receive Covid-19 vaccinations as was done at the Super Sunday targeted effort for food and supermarket workers last Sunday.

AFDA is supportive of the NSW Government's vaccination targets of six million vaccinations by the end of August and 70% of the population double vaccinated by October/November as key to lifting the current lockdown restrictions. We believe a high level of vaccinations in the funeral sector will be critical to this success given our interaction with the public at funerals.

Throughout the pandemic the funeral industry has been exemplary in the management of hygiene controls with COVID-19 deceased and as gatekeepers of funeral attendance restrictions. However, the removal of COVID-19 positive deceased from the place of death into the care of funeral workers carries obvious health risks, as does the exposure of funeral workers to covid-positive attendees at funerals. Should funeral workers be exposed, and need to quarantine, it may mean closure of businesses and deceased not being able to be transferred and cared for. There is also a likelihood that funerals may not be able to take place at all, particularly in regional areas.

Therefore, vaccinating funeral workers is critical to both their own protection and protecting the broader community. Under current restrictions AFDA members are exposed to on average 5,500 people per week. Once restrictions ease and funerals are allowed back to 50 people per funeral, AFDA members in NSW will have exposure to on average over 27,500 customers per week. Vaccinating funeral home staff will reduce the currently considerable risk of funerals becoming "super spreader events."

Furthermore, failure to be vaccinated at the earliest opportunity may prevent funeral directors from being able to provide an essential service to hospitals and aged care facilities if they are denied access for not being vaccinated.

AFDA requests that funeral directors be included in priority group access as funeral workers are exposed to all 3 key areas where priority group vaccination is granted.

- potential exposure to COVID-19 cases (such as healthcare and quarantine workers)
- age and medical conditions

- vulnerability or regular contact with vulnerable people.

AFDA requests that funeral directors be included as a priority group to whom vaccines are allocated, particularly those within the twelve LGAs of heightened concern. We ask that funeral workers be afforded the same opportunity for vaccination as NSW afforded food and supermarket workers at Homebush last Sunday. If this can be done AFDA will promote the opportunity amongst our members in NSW, encouraging members and their employees to take up the opportunity.

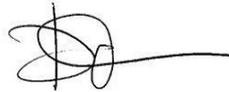
We have copied Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant on this letter.

Our government relations consultant, Mr Alistair Nicholas, will be in contact with your office to follow up on this matter.

Yours faithfully



Adrian Barrett
National President



Dale Gilson
Chief Executive Officer